



Day 14: COURAGE TO LIVE FOR CHRIST

Scripture Reading:

2 Timothy 3:12 (ESV)

Matthew 5:44 (ESV)

1 Peter 4:12-14 (ESV)

Observation:

Having the courage to live Christ even though we face persecution is one the greatest witnesses we can do. Consider this story about Jackie Robinson.

Robinson was born in 1919 into a culture steeped in racism. And from early childhood it drove Robinson mad. Historian Jackson Lears, writing in the New Republic, says Robinson had “a reputation as a mad brawler, always ready to smash in the teeth of any white man who insulted him.” Later, at UCLA, he gained a reputation as a thug.

But it was also at UCLA that Robinson began to encounter the forces that would free him from some of his rage. One was a nursing student named Rachel Isum, whom he later married. The other was a black minister named Karl Downs, whose hard-hitting sermons taught Robinson that Christianity was not a synonym for racial submission.

By 1945 Robinson had developed a firm conviction that God had an important purpose for his life. That purpose became clear when Robinson was summoned to the office of Branch Rickey, general manager for the Brooklyn Dodgers. Rickey was determined to make history by putting the first black player on a major league team. But first Rickey made certain Robinson understood what he would face: everything from racial epithets to physical assaults to hotel clerks refusing him accommodations. Rickey challenged Robinson, telling him he was “looking for a ballplayer with guts enough not to fight back”—a phrase that has since become legendary.

What is less well known is that Rickey also handed Robinson a copy of a book by Giovanni Papini called *The Life of Christ*. And he reminded Robinson of the words of Jesus: “Resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.” By quoting Scripture, Lears writes, Rickey “was hitting Robinson in the heart, invoking the Methodist Christianity that they shared.”

Robinson’s struggle began as soon as he walked out onto the ball field wearing a Dodgers uniform. During his ten years with the Dodgers, he endured racist remarks, death threats, and unfair calls by umpires. But Robinson’s faith helped him keep his anger in check. Every night, he got on his knees and prayed for self-control. “Through all the frustrations,” writes Lears, “his Christianity sustained him.” Robinson left baseball in 1956 and spent the rest of his life working in the civil-rights movement. Despite personal tragedies and setbacks, Robinson’s faith in Christ never wavered.¹

Application:

- Describe a time in your life when you faced persecution for the cause of Christ?
- Using the scripture readings from today, where do you find the courage to live for Christ?
- How can you share the love of Christ in the midst of persecution?

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¹ Charles W. Colson, “The Jackie Robinson Story-Baseball’s Great Experiment,” Inspirational Archive, May 11, 2011, <http://www.inspirationalarchive.com/749/the-jackie-robinson-story-baseballs-great-experiment/> (Accessed October 16, 2017).